

CURTAINS WITHOUT BORDERS, INC.
Preserving Historic Painted Scenery
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ADVERTISING STREET SCENE FROM BURLINGTON, VT

This roll drop curtain was painted 1930-35 by Granite State Studios in Plymouth NH. We have no record of where it hung, but it was a backdrop on a stage the size of Contois Auditorium. We know this because the height of the curtain is exactly right for Contois. The width is narrower because the curtain has been cut/torn on the sides. It is now 15ft wide, instead of the approximately 20ft it should be.

The scene shows an imaginary street, which is how all the advertising street scenes were constructed. There is, for instance, no statue of Joan of Arc at the foot of Church Street! Many of the businesses are gone; others changed their name but are still around. For instance, Burlington Mattress became Vermont Mattress. Burlington Paint & Wallpaper became Vermont Paint & Wallpaper. Lippa's is obviously still there. The blimp has Shepard & Hamell, which many people will remember. A few businesses are from St. Albans and even Newport – this happened when travelling salesman would promise stores a spot on a second curtain other than their own, or because some of the slots might not have found Burlington buyers. We'll never know.

The appropriate place for this curtain is just in front of the black "traveler" at the back of the stage. It will look great, especially with the two small spotlights we will install that will be permanently positioned to illuminate it. Without the spotlights, it will be in a general gloom at the back. There will be a separate (lockable) switch for these spots so there will no confusion for people using the stage.

The ropes for this curtain will also be locked so they can only be let down by Alan Campbell (and perhaps me) – again for safety sake.

The conservation team and the professional rigger are available to get this curtain installed by First Night if we can raise the funds. Conservation will take two days in Contois and rigging will take one day. The rigger has also agreed to lower the historic movie screen that is already stored at Contois so we can wrap it in Tyvek and then raise it up again and tie it off. It is presently held up with thin, inadequate rope and not protected from dirt. This is a 1930's movie screen in very good condition. It seems to have been from the Majestic Theater. It might be wanted some day for a historic theater elsewhere.

There are two parts to the budget – conservation and installation. The conservation costs are \$4,735 and involve two conservators and two assistants. This curtain is 18ft high and 15ft wide – very large. Conservation will be done by Curtains Without Borders.

The rigging will be done by Robert Brier of Show Works in Barre. Robert has installed all of the large pieces of historic scenery in Vermont. We have worked with him for 8 years and consider him part of the conservation team. He has done Enosburg Opera House, Haskell Opera House, and many others. He will provide and attach the two small spotlights, but the electrical hook-up will be done by the city electricians at the school department. Alan Campbell and Robert have determined that there is plenty of capacity for this small electrical addition. Robert Brier's fee is \$3,787, but he needs to add the cost of the spotlights to this.

The total cost is therefore about \$9,000. We have between \$1,500 and \$2,000 already pledged but we must raise the rest. We have no residual federal funding left from the statewide project of stabilizing all 184 other historic theater curtains in Vermont.

A contribution from the city of \$2,000 would be of significant help. We could also use any clues about who might still be alive who was connected to any of the curtain businesses.

A photo is attached. Seven Days also just did a nice story about the curtain.

We would also like to make a plaque or picture for the wall that should show the curtain and record the recovery of the curtain for the citizens of Burlington. Ownership needs to pass from Curtains Without Borders to the City. People need to see the image without rolling the curtain up and down too frequently.

Thanks

Chris Hadsel, Director